



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 28, 2018

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Iowa's pheasant population second highest in a decade



Young pheasants dry off the morning dew along the edge of an Iowa gravel road. Iowa's statewide average of 21 pheasants per route is second highest in a decade. Only 2015 with its statewide average of 23 birds per route was higher. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

BOONE - Iowa's pheasant hunters can expect to find more birds this fall when they head to the fields, predict state wildlife experts. That forecast is based on the recently completed statewide population survey of pheasants, quail, partridge, cottontail rabbits and jackrabbits.

Iowa's pheasant population increased in every nine county region except northwest where it was similar to last year. The survey counted a state average of 21 birds per 30 mile route which translates to a statewide harvest estimate of 250,000 to 300,000 roosters this fall.

The August roadside survey is tool used by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to physically record the number of upland game seen while driving the survey routes. It's a product of 218 30-mile routes across that state that are conducted Aug. 1-15 beginning at sunrise. The survey has used the same routes since 1962.

"We weren't sure what to expect from the survey this year because the spring weather was all over the board and it likely impacted some nesting success," said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the Iowa DNR. April started cold with 10-20 inches of snow across northern Iowa and then switched to warm and dry by the end of May.

"The take home message is, if you had good hunting last year, you can expect similar hunting or better hunting across most of the state this year," he said.

The 2018 count was an increase over the 15 birds per route in 2017. However, Bogenschutz said dry conditions in 2017 likely did not accurately reflect the pheasant population and when adjusted for the lack of dew the population would be similar, but still slightly lower than 2018.

Another positive for hunters is the quail and cottontail rabbit populations, both at present day highs.

"Anyone who has ever had an interest in quail hunting or hasn't hunted quail recently – this would be a good fall to go," Bogenschutz said.

Iowa's quail range is across the southern third of the state. Rabbits are abundant in all parts of Iowa with the highest populations in southern and east central regions.

Partridge population is similar to 2017 with the highest population in central and northern Iowa.

The lone exception is jackrabbits which have seen its numbers fall likely due to a landscape that shifted from producing small grains and fields of short grasses to larger fields of corn and soybeans.

The August roadside survey and game distribution maps are available online at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey.

- Pheasant season is Oct. 27 to Jan. 10, 2019
- Quail season is Oct. 27 to Jan. 31, 2019
- Partridge season is Oct. 13 to Jan. 31, 2019
- Cottontail rabbit season is Sept. 1 to Feb. 28, 2019
- Jackrabbit season is closed.

Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-979-0828.

Zebra mussels found in Storm Lake

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently confirmed that zebra mussels are in Storm Lake.

The DNR collects water samples and deploys settlement samplers in lakes across the state each summer to monitor for the invasive zebra mussel. Young zebra mussels (called veligers) were found in an August water sample, and further investigation discovered juvenile and adult zebra mussels in several locations around the lake. DNR staff will conduct additional monitoring at Storm Lake this fall and next summer to determine the abundance and distribution of zebra mussels.

The documentation of zebra mussels in another lake highlights the spread of aquatic invasive species in Iowa waters. “The zebra mussels in Storm Lake probably arrived on or in a boat that had picked up the mussels from an infested water body, like the Spirit/Okoboji chain of lakes or the Missouri River,” said Kim Bogenschutz, the DNR’s Aquatic Invasive Species Program coordinator.

Zebra mussels look like small, D-shaped clams that have alternating light and dark bands. Most are less than one inch long. They are filter feeders that can form dense clusters as they attach to hard underwater surfaces. Large infestations may interfere with aquatic food chains, kill native mussels, clog water intakes, increase algae blooms, and cover beaches with dead shells. Currently there is no effective treatment to control zebra mussels once they have infested a lake.

Young zebra mussels are microscopic and can be unintentionally transported with water in live wells, bilges, ballast or bait buckets. Adult zebra mussels can attach to boats, trailers and aquatic vegetation.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species, such as zebra mussels, in Iowa. Boaters must also drain all water from boats and equipment before leaving a water access and must keep drain plugs removed or opened during transport.

“Boaters and anglers can unintentionally spread zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species if they do not take the proper precautions - clean, drain, dry - after each time out on the water,” said Bogenschutz.

- CLEAN any plants, animals or mud from boat and equipment before you leave a water body.
- DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well, bait bucket) before you leave a water body.
- DRY anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before you move to another waterbody either:
 - Spray your boat and trailer with hot, high-pressure water; or
 - Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days.
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a water body unless they came out of that water body and empty unwanted bait in the trash.

“Draining all water is a critical step in preventing the spread of zebra mussels,” said Bogenschutz.

Find more information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters in the 2018 Iowa Fishing Regulations booklet or on the DNR’s website at www.iowadnr.gov/ais.

Media Contact: For more information, contact Kim Bogenschutz, Boone Wildlife Research Station at 515-290-0540 or Ben Wallace, Black Hawk Fisheries Office at 712-657-2638.

Space available in upcoming hunter education classes

Hunter Education Classroom courses are offered by knowledgeable and certified volunteer instructors and Iowa Department of Natural Resources Conservation Officers. Classroom courses are typically 12-15 hours in length and are held over 2 to 3 sessions (days). In order to receive certification, a student must attend all sessions and pass the final exam.

Iowa law requires that anyone born after January 1, 1972 must be certified in hunter education before they are eligible to purchase an Iowa hunting license.

Upcoming Hunter Education Classes

Sept. 6, New Hampton, Fredericksburg Sportsmans Club

Sept. 6, Knoxville, Marion County Sportsman Club

Sept. 8, Swisher, America Legion

Sept. 8, Muscatine, Muscatine County Conservation Board, Environmental Learning Center

Sept. 8, Blue Grass, Oak Hills Gun Club

Sept. 8, Madrid, Madrid High School

Sept. 8, Shenandoah, Elks Lodge

Sept. 8, Lenox, Lenox Fire Station

Sept. 8, Aplington, Aplington Community Center

Sept. 10, Polk City, Butch Olofson Shooting Range

Sept. 11, Marcus, Grace Methodist Church

Sept. 11, DeWitt, Wapsi Valley Ikes

Sept. 12, Palo, Palo Outdoors

Sept. 13, Tipton, Cedar County Conservation Board Office

Sept. 15, Waterloo, Hawkeye Community College

Sept. 15, St. Charles, Hutton Taxidermy

Sept. 15, Mt. Ayr, Dragoon Trace Nature Center

Sept. 15, Quimby, Peterson Family Farm

Sept. 17, Clarinda, American Legion

Sept. 18, Osceola, Clarke Elementary School

Sept. 19, Exira, Audubon County Conservation Board

Sept. 19, Independence, Buchanan County Wildlife Association

Sept. 20, Dubuque, EB Lyons Interpretive Center - Mines of Spain

Sept. 20, Waukon, Allamakee Sportsmans Club

Sept. 20, Iowa City, Fin and Feather

Sept. 22, Sigourney, Keokuk County Sportsman Club

Sept. 25, Toddville, Wickiup Hill Learning Center

Sept. 27, Peosta, North Iowa Community College

Sept. 29, Mount Pleasant, Henry County Nature Center

Oct. 1, Polk City, Butch Olofson Shooting Range

Oct. 1, Sioux City, Elks Lodge #112

Oct. 6, Waterloo, Hawkeye Community College

Oct. 13, Keswick, Keswick Fire Station

Oct. 15, Polk City, Butch Olofson Shooting Range

Oct. 16, Nevada, Gates Hall

Oct. 19, Osage, Mitchell County Nature Center

Oct. 23, Bellevue, Bellevue State Park Lodge

Oct. 23, Ottumwa, Izaak Walton League – Ottumwa

Nov. 5, Polk City, Butch Olofson Shooting Range

For more information on these and other hunter education opportunities, go to www.iowadnr.gov/huntered

Tree stand safety focus of awareness campaign

The campaign to reduce and eliminate tree stand accidents by raising awareness of this issue and providing education about safe tree stand hunting best practices appears to be getting positive results.

Nationally, the estimated number of falls from tree stands requiring emergency room visits decreased by 28 percent in 2017.

“That’s a significant, positive move on the tree stand injury prevention front but we still have room for improvement,” said Megan Wisecup, hunter education administrator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Nearly all of tree stand incidents are preventable by implementing three simple measures: First, inspect your equipment. Second, wear a full-body harness and third, stay connected from the time your feet leave the ground. It really is that simple.

Tree stand accidents can happen to deer hunters of all skill levels and result in serious injury or death. In Iowa last year, there were four tree stand incidents and all resulted in injury.

“Hunters should take tree stand safety seriously, every time you hunt from, hang, or move a tree stand,” Wisecup said.

Since September is traditionally a busy time for deer hunters who are preparing for the upcoming hunting season; it has been chosen as Tree Stand Safety Awareness Month.

To help prevent injuries, the Iowa DNR in partnership with TSSA, is promoting a new awareness campaign called the “ABC’s of Tree Stand Safety.”

Always remove and inspect your equipment

Buckle on your full-body harness

Connect to the tree before your feet leave the ground

“By performing these three simple steps, tree stand users can virtually eliminate their risk of falling to the ground as the majority of falls occur outside the stand,” Wisecup said.

Tree stand safety awareness month is national campaign by tree stand manufacturers, retailers, media, natural resource agencies and deer hunters to reduce the estimated number of tree stand incidents by 50 percent by 2023.

Media Contact: Megan Wisecup, Hunter Education Administrator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-238-4968 or Jeff Barnes, Recreation Safety Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-290-4907.

Iowa shooters win six events at national competition

Marengo, Ohio - Iowa action shooters won six categories at the National Championship of the Scholastic Action Shooting Program, in Marengo, Ohio, led by Dysart’s Nate Gibson who captured top honors in Rimfire Pistol, Pistol Caliber Carbine and Iron Rifle.

More than 500 athletes from 19 states competed in the week-long championship July 14-21 at the Cardinal Shooting Center. Participants shoot a series of steel targets in the least amount of time using an optics rifle, iron rifle, centerfire pistol, rimfire pistol or 1911 model pistol.

Iowa was represented by five teams and individual shooters totaling 120 athletes.

For information on how to form a team, contact Rachel Ladd, Hunter Education and Shooting Sports Program, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-729-6037 or Rachel.ladd@iowa.dnr.gov

Iowa Place Winners

Rimfire Pistol - Men's Division 1st place

Nate Gibson, Dysart, 31.58 match time

Centerfire Pistol - Collegiate Open Division 2nd place

Steel Shooters of Traer - squad time 342.39

Matt Whannel, Traer,

Tanner Calderwood, Traer

Centerfire Pistol- Women's Senior Varsity Division 2nd place

Megan Carty, Dysart, 60.08 match time

Optics Rifle - Collegiate Open Division 2nd place

Steel Shooters of Traer - squad time 342.39

Matt Whannel Traer

Tanner Calderwood, Traer

Optics Rifle - Men's Division 2nd place

Nate Gibson, Dysart, 29.68 match time

Optics Rifle - Men's Intermediate-Entry Division 2nd place

Kaleb Klein, Dysart, 36.18 match time

Iron Rifle - Intermediate Division 2nd place

Steel Shooters of Traer - squad time 201.09

Sydney Vavroch

Kaleb Klein, Dysart

Nate Gibson, Dysart

Alexander Meggers, Traer

Iron Rifle - Collegiate Open Division 2nd place

Steel Shooters of Traer - squad time 346.09

Matt Whannel, Traer

Tanner Calderwood, Traer

Iron Rifle - Men's Division 1st place

Nate Gibson, Dysart, 28.21 match time

1911 - Collegiate Open Division 1st place

Steel Shooters of Traer - squad time 339.8

Matt Whannel, Traer

Tanner Calderwood, Traer

1911 - Men's Intermediate-Advanced Division 1st place

Nate Gibson, Dysart, 72.81 match time

1911 - Men's Collegiate Division 2nd place

Tanner Calderwood, Traer, 60.56 match time

1911 - Women's Senior Varsity Division 2nd place

Megan Carty, Dysart, 64.44 match time

Pistol Caliber Carbine - Collegiate Open Division 1st place

Steel Shooters of Traer - squad time 339.8

Matt Whannel, Traer

Tanner Calderwood, Traer

Pistol Caliber Carbine - Intermediate Division 2nd place

Steel Shooters of Traer - squad time 339.8

Nate Gibson, Dysart

Sydney Vavroch

Kaleb Klein, Dysart

Alexander Meggers, Traer

Pistol Caliber Carbine - Men's Intermediate Entry Division 2nd place

Kaleb Klein, Dysart, 46.60 match time

Pistol Caliber Carbine - Men's Intermediate Advanced Division 1st place

Nate Gibson, Dysart, 33.61 match time

Pistol Caliber Carbine - Men's Collegiate Division 2nd place

Tanner Calderwood, Traer, 45.39 match time

